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Lieberman criticizes Clinton

In speech from U.S. Senate floor, Connecticut Democrat calls President's actions immoral, harmful, unacceptable

WASHINGTON (*Associated Press*)— In a menacing sign for the White House, Democratic Sen. Joseph Lieberman said Thursday that President Clinton's behavior with Monica Lewinsky was "immoral and it is harmful" and Clinton deserves public rebuke.

"In this case, the president apparently had extramarital relations with an employee half his age and did so in the workplace in the vicinity of the Oval Office," the Connecticut Democrat said in a sternly worded speech on the Senate floor.

Such behavior, he said, "is harmful for it sends a message of what is acceptable behavior to the American public."

Lieberman thus became the first member of either party since Clinton's grand jury testimony last month to use the Senate floor to address the issue. Party elders

had hoped he would avoid speaking, but within moments after he concluded, two fellow Democrats -- as well as Republican leader Trent Lott of Mississippi -- rose to praise him for it.

Lieberman has fashioned a record as a centrist Democrat since coming to the Senate a decade ago, and has worked closely with Clinton on many issues. At the same time, he has spoken out forcefully on moral issues in the past, and he said he felt compelled to do so in this case.

Barry Toiv, Clinton's deputy press secretary, avoided criticism of Lieberman in responding.

"The president has great respect for Senator Lieberman because of the key role he has played in the president's accomplishments on behalf of the American

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NHS students voice opinions on scandal

Feelings vary in reponses to Stevens's "Complaint of the Week"

The opinions of a number of Newington High School students on the Monica Lewinsky scandal were revealed Thursday night when Tim Stevens sent his 23rd e-mail "Complaint of the Week" to his mailing list, including responses to his 22nd "Complaint," which was focused on President Clinton's troubles.

In Complaint #22 on August 20, Stevens wrote on the topic "Clinton vs. Starr, the guilty parties." He cited the American public, the press, Linda Tripp, Monica Lewinsky, Kenneth Starr, the Supreme Court, and last but not least, President Clinton. Of the president, Stevens wrote: "Shame on you sir. You have crippled yourself for the rest of the term and at least the next President as well. You have destroyed America's fragile trust in you and, more importantly, the trust of your wife and daughter. You by no means deserve to be impeached for adultery, but you do deserve scorn. You

messed up in a big way sir. Your place in history is now reserved. Hope it is all you dreamed of."

Stevens's comments drew widely varied responses, and it was those responses which were publically aired Thursday in Complaint #23's "Letters" section.

"Clinton's life is his private life. Although he is our leader, we need not know everything about his private life," wrote Beth Milewski, who said she sees the issue from both sides. From the other side, she wrote, "By taking the oath he made a conscious choice to lead the American citizens, to be their role model, and to promote peace and equality. What he did, in a government building of all places, demoralizes the entire country... If our president cannot perform his duties to the fullest extent possible, then he should have the dignity and respect for the American people to resign."

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Lieberman: Clinton's actions "immoral"

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people," he said. "It's always hardest to hear criticism from a friend, but I am sure the president will consider Senator Lieberman's words with the same care with which they were delivered."

Lieberman said that Clinton's behavior was wrong, his initial effort to mislead the public about it was damaging, and in Clinton's nationally televised speech on Aug. 17, "his assumption of responsibility inadequate."

In all, Lieberman added, the president had "compromised his moral authority," damaged his credibility and complicated the efforts of parents seeking to instill "values of honesty" in their own children.

At the same time, Lieberman said it would be premature for Congress to take any action before Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr submits a report to lawmakers.

Few Democrats were present to hear Lieberman's remarks. But top Republican leaders, including Lott and the GOP whip, Don Nickles, were present and listening closely from their seats a few yards away.

Lieberman said that Clinton "had by his disgraceful behavior jeopardized his administration's historic record of accomplishment."

"The president's relationship with Ms. Lewinsky not only contradicted the values he has publicly embraced over the last six years," Lieberman said. "It has, I fear, compromised his moral authority."

Democratic officials had said earlier in the week that Lieberman was weighing a call for censure of the president, and said they had hoped no senator would comment publicly with the president overseas. While Lieberman waited until Clinton had left Russia, he chose to speak with the presidential traveling party in Northern Ireland.

Lieberman noted that while some people have already called for Clinton's resignation, presidential supporters want the nation to move beyond the entire episode.

"Appealing as that option may be, the transgressions the president has admitted to are too consequential for us to walk away and leave the impression for our children today and our posterity tomorrow that the conduct he admitted to in the White House are acceptable," he said.

Clinton's conduct, he declared, should be followed "by some measure of public rebuke and accountability." Surely, he added, Congress is capable of "expressing such disapproval through a resolution of reprimand or censure, but it is premature to do so," before Starr submits his report.

Lieberman made his comments as Republican officials in the House were preparing for such a report, even though there was no indication that Starr had notified them one was coming.

Officials said legislation would be prepared to refer the material to the Judiciary Committee.

Under legislation that governs his appointment, Starr must give Congress a report on any evidence he uncovers that contains evidence of impeachable offenses by Clinton.

Moments after Lieberman spoke, fellow Democrats Bob Kerrey of Nebraska and Daniel Moynihan of New York praised him for having done so.

"It will be for us to discharge our sworn duties," said Moynihan, in an evident reference to the constitutional provision that the Senate vote on removing the president from office if the House votes articles of impeachment.

In brief remarks, Lott said he meant to keep the entire issue nonpartisan.

"I'm sure that we'll find a way to rise above petty politics and do the right thing," he said.

NHS students: Opinions vary widely

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"I think that Clinton was right when he stood up for himself by saying that this was his private matter. It is private and it's none of our business," wrote Kristin Vasil. "We shouldn't be looking at him as the man who cheated on his wife, but as a man who is our leader."

"I agree completely that the president cannot be impeached because of adultery but he can be if he lied under oath or told anyone else to do so, which he obviously did. The fact that Clinton is a lying, skirt-chasing, pot-smoking, draft-dodging sleaze does not surprise me.

The President is the moral leader of this country and he has failed miserably," stated Eileen Banach. She added that "if Clinton has repeatedly broken a promise he made to his wife, how can we expect him to stay uncorrupted as the leader of the free world?"

Bryan Rudolph questioned Clinton's motives in ordering the bombing of terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan, then added, "I don't know how much I can trust Clinton. I think that's really scary when you can't trust your President and you start doubting his

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NHS students voice opinions on Clinton

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intentions.”

“Just about every president ever elected has had an affair in office. And we all know Clinton’s a liar; this doesn’t discredit him anymore than he already has been. So let’s all get over it. We have more important matters of state to deal with than a soap opera,” wrote Sean Vivier. “Clinton’s lechery is not a political issue. So let’s end Kenneth Starr’s witch hunt and get on with our lives.”

The final comment in Stevens’s “Letters” section came from *Living Room Times* editor Brendan Loy, who wrote in part: “We always knew Bill Clinton was a lying, cheating, womanizing weasel, and we elected him twice anyway. Now we want to throw him out of office because he’s a lying, cheating, womanizing weasel. It doesn’t make sense. But maybe it’s the right thing to do for the country anyway. Perhaps. Perhaps not. I don’t know. If, in the end, we *do* throw him out, perhaps we should all resolve, as a nation, to never again elect someone who we know is a lying, cheating, womanizing weasel.”

“Well, it was just a thought,” Loy added.

“The President is the moral leader of this country and he has failed miserably.”

—**Eileen Banach**

“Clinton’s lechery is not a political issue. So let’s end Kenneth Starr’s witch hunt and get on with our lives.” —**Sean Vivier**